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May 29, 2009

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Mr. Mark LaNeve
North American Vice President of Sales, Service and Marketing
General Motors Corporation
P.O. Box 33170
Detroit, Michigan 48232-5170

Dear Mr. LaNeve:

I am writing to direct your attention to an issue which, if left unchanged, will negatively impact an important member of Central Oregon's business community—Bob Thomas Car Company. It has come to my attention that General Motors has unilaterally and arbitrarily informed the owners of Bob Thomas Car Company, Bob and Clella Thomas, that it is terminating their dealer agreement. I ask that you reconsider this decision. Bob and Clella are not just longstanding and stellar distributors of GM products; they are the kind of community builders that are essential to Oregon's commercial and social fabric. If GM abrogates Bob Thomas Car Company's dealer agreement, it will have no distribution or service outlets in Central Oregon's largest city, forcing current GM owners to travel at least 48 miles to access maintenance and warranty services. In short, terminating their GM dealership will negatively impact the Thomases, their employees, GM customers and the community at large.

Few have "given back" more to the community than this family. Bob Thomas's father, Walter Coombs, not only opened the GM dealership in 1916, he also helped found Central Oregon Community College. In recognition of her work exhorting community support for schools, Clella Thomas was named Bend Citizen of the Year by the Chamber of Commerce last year. In just the past decade Bob and Clella were key players in the renovation of the Tower Theater and the Boys and Girls Club, and in raising funds for major ball field complexes in town. In short, they are just the kind of business people who built this state and our country into an economic powerhouse and we will need their skills and those of their peers if we are to regain that position again.

While Central Oregon's economic climate is currently challenging, Bob Thomas Car Company has weathered tough times before. In fact, the Bob Thomas dealership has made money for GM for more than 90 years and, with your cooperation, can continue doing so in the future. I am certain that Bend will recover from this downturn, and when it does, Bob Thomas Car Company is likely to be at the forefront of the economic turnaround.

As you and the federal government's Auto Task Force seek to restructure General Motors to compete in the 21st Century, it is my hope that you recognize the value that distributors like Bob and Clella Thomas bring to your brand and what a loss it would be to Bend and General Motors if that relationship was severed.

Therefore, I ask that you review your decision to terminate the dealership, and reassess whether or not General Motors can afford to lose, not just a distributor, but also the diminishment of goodwill that would result from the loss of such a valued member of the community.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator

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